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FAMOUS STAR OF THE HOPALONG CASSIDY MOVIES

Bill Boyd WESTERN

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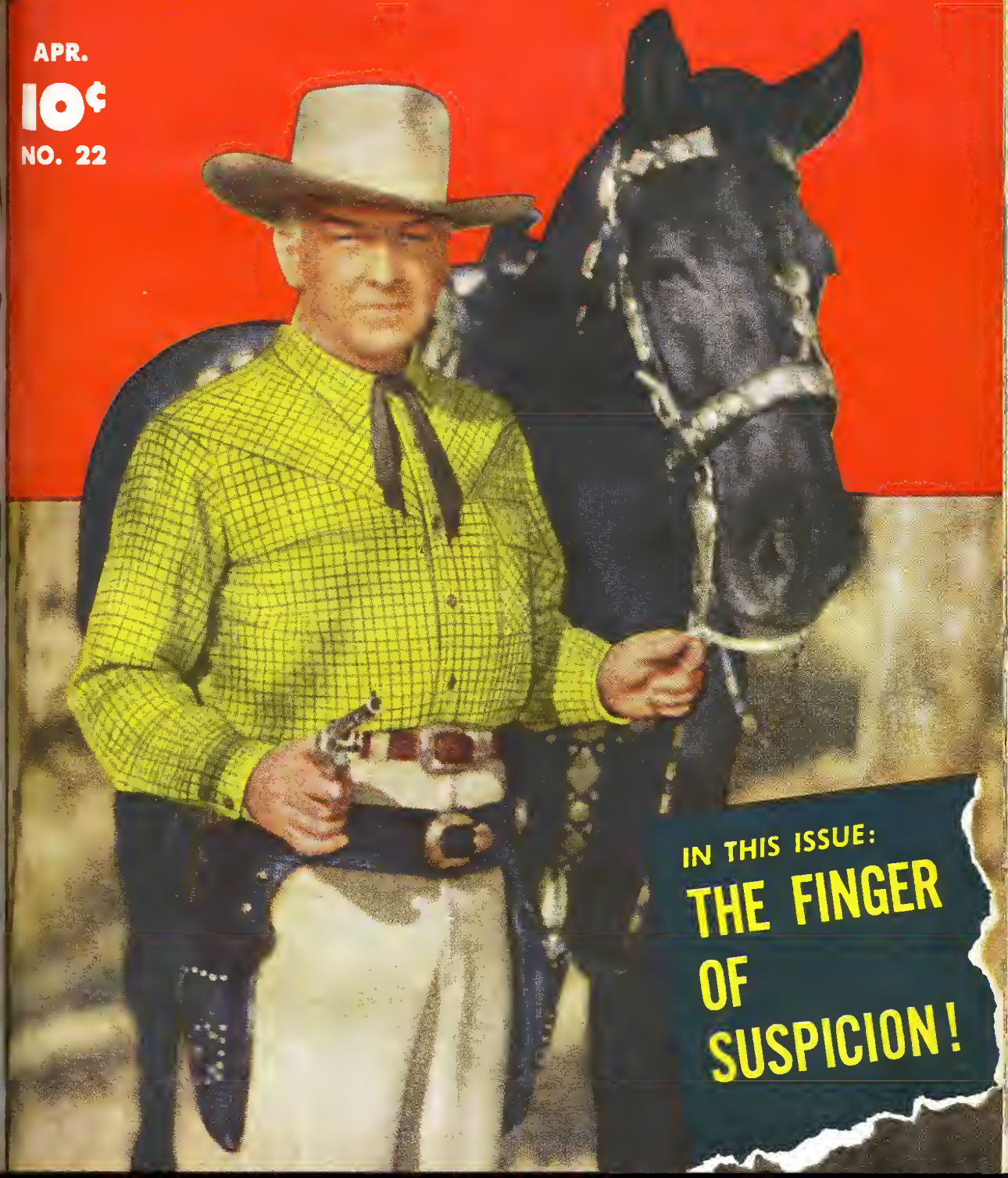
10¢
NO. 22



IN THIS ISSUE:
THE FINGER OF SUSPICION!

ANNOUNCING the new DAISY DEFENDER repeating AIR RIFLE

FIRST AND ONLY FORCE-FEED LEVER-ACTION DAISY IN 30 YEARS!

featuring

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Every effort is made to insure that these comic magazines contain the highest quality of wholesome entertainment.

W. H. Fawcett, Jr. President

Bill Boyd and THE FINGER OF SUSPICION

BUT I TELL YOU, BILL, I DON'T KNOW HOW THAT STOLEN BANK MONEY GOT INTO MY VALISE!

SINCE YOUR VALISE NEVER LEFT THE RANCH HOUSE AND WE TWO WERE THE ONLY ONES ON THE RANCH, IT LOOKS AS IF ONLY ONE OF US COULD HAVE PLANTED THE STOLEN MONEY INSIDE IT!

GUILT BY IMPLICATION IS NOT THE STRONGEST FORM OF EVIDENCE, BUT WHEN THERE'S NO OTHER EVIDENCE AROUND, IT TAKES ON ADDED STRENGTH! WILL *BILL BOYD* BE ABLE TO REDIRECT *THE FINGER OF SUSPICION?*

AT THE NANCY DEE RANCH....

I'M HEARTBROKEN, BILL, THAT YOU WON'T STAY ON AS MY FOREMAN, BUT I DO APPRECIATE ALL YOU'VE DONE TO HELP ME GET THIS RANCH INTO SHAPE SINCE MY FATHER DIED!

YOUR FATHER WAS A FRIEND OF MINE, NANCY, AND IT WAS A PLEASURE TO BE ABLE TO DO SOMETHING FOR HIS DAUGHTER!

THE HANDS YOU'VE HIRED TO HELP YOU RUN THIS SPREAD LOOKED VERY CAPABLE TO ME, NANCY, AND THINGS SHOULD START HUMMING WHEN THEY REPORT FOR WORK IN THE MORNING! NOW I THINK I'LL BE ON MY WAY!

BEFORE YOU GO, BILL, I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU ONE LAST FAVOR!

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SINCE YOU'RE HEADING TOWARD TOWN, I WONDER IF YOU WOULD PUT ALL MY VALUABLES IN MY VAULT AT THE BANK!
I THINK THE BANK WILL BE CLOSED BY THE TIME I REACH TOWN, BUT I CAN GIVE THEM TO THE SHERIFF AND HAVE HIM PUT THEM IN THE BANK FOR YOU IN THE MORNING!
THANKS, BILL, AND DON'T FORGET, WHENEVER YOU'RE IN THESE PARTS, YOU CAN CONSIDER THIS RANCH YOUR HOME!
I CERTAINLY WILL! NOW LET'S GET GOING, MIDNITE!
SHORTLY AFTER, ALONG THE RIVER EDGE.....
I SEE SOMEONE COMING AND HE'S HEADING TOWARD TOWN! WHAT LUCK, HE'S CARRYING A VALISE! I'D BETTER JUMP INTO THE RIVER NOW!
SPLASH!
WHOA, MIDNITE! THAT MAN'S IN TROUBLE!
HELP! HELP! I CAN'T SWIM!
HELP! HELP!
TAKE IT EASY! I'LL GET YOU OUT!
SPLASH!
JUST RELAX AND IT'LL MAKE THINGS EASIER!

BUT WHAT'S THIS? IS SOMEONE TRYING TO ROB NANCY DEE'S VALISE WHILE BILL BOYD IS TRYING TO RESCUE A MAN?
BUT IT'S NOT A ROBBERY! THE MYSTERIOUS HAND IS PUTTING MONEY INTO THE VALISE!
MEANWHILE...
YUH (GASP) SAVED MY LIFE, PARDNER!
MAY I GIVE YOU A RIDE BACK TO TOWN?
NO, THANKS! I LIVE CLOSE BY!
WELL, I'D BETTER BE ON MY WAY! LET'S GO, MIDNITE!
HE'S GONE! DID YOU CARRY OUT YOUR PART OF THE PLAN, CLIFTON?
I SURE DID, LAWFORD!
GOOD! NOW LET'S GET OUR HORSES! WE CAN'T LET THAT HOMBRE OUT OF OUR SIGHT NOW!
SHORTLY AFTER, AT THE LOCAL SHERIFF'S OFFICE.....
I'LL BE GLAD TO DEPOSIT ALL OF MISS DEE'S VALUABLES IN THE BANK VAULT FOR HER, BILL, BUT BEFORE YOU LEAVE, I'D LIKE TO MAKE A LIST OF THEM SO THERE WON'T BE ANY MISTAKE!
WHATEVER YOU SAY, SHERIFF!
SAY, LOOK AT ALL THOSE BILLS! I'D BETTEN COUNT IT! DID YOU KNOW SHE PUT MONEY IN HERE?
NO! SHE DIDN'T MENTION ANYTHING ABOUT CASH!

A FEW MINUTES LATER...
THERE'S FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLARS IN BILLS HERE!
FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLARS! BUT WHERE COULD SHE HAVE GOTTEN SO MUCH MONEY? HER FATHER LEFT HER ONLY A FEW THOUSAND DOLLARS IN CASH! THE REST OF THE INHERITANCE WAS IN THE RANCH PROPERTY!
I DON'T LIKE THE LOOKS OF THIS!! THE NUMBERS ON THESE BILLS CORRESPOND TO THOSE STOLEN FROM THE BANK LAST NIGHT--AND SO DOES THE AMOUNT! WE CHASED AFTER THE OUTLAWS, BUT LOST THEM! I POSTED LOOKOUTS, BUT WE'VE HAD NO LUCK SO FAR!
WHAT! IF THAT'S STOLEN MONEY, HOW COULD IT HAVE GOTTEN INTO NANCY'S BAG?
THAT'S WHAT I INTEND TO FIND OUT! AS SOON AS I LOCK ALL OF THIS UP, WE'RE RIDING BACK TO SEE NANCY DEE!
AND AS THEY RIDE OFF....
THERE THEY GO, BUT WITHOUT THE VALISE! OF ALL THE DUMB THINGS! WHY DID YUH HAVE TO PICK ON HIM TO PULL YUH OUT OF THE RIVER?
HOW WAS I TO KNOW HE WAS BILL BOYD AND THAT HE WAS HEADING FOR THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE?
I RECKON WE MIGHT AS WELL FORGET ABOUT THE BANK LOOT AND BEAT IT!
NOT SO FAST, CLIFTON! WE DON'T KNOW FOR SURE THAT THE SHERIFF KNOWS WHAT'S IN THE VALISE! BOYD MIGHT HAVE LEFT IT THERE FOR JUST A LITTLE WHILE!
YEAH! YOU'RE RIGHT! IF BOYD COMES BACK FOR THE VALISE, WE CAN STILL FOLLOW HIM AND TAKE THE LOOT!
SURE! WE COULDN'T VAMOOSE LAST NIGHT BECAUSE WE WERE SPOTTED AS WE LEFT THE BANK AND A POSSE GOT AFTER US. BUT I SURE DIDN'T GO THROUGH ALL THAT TROUBLE FOR NOTHING!
ALL WE'VE GOT TO DO IS HANG AROUND AND KEEP WATCH!
BUT WHAT IF HE SHOULD RECOGNIZE YOU AS THE HOMBRE HE PULLED OUT OF THE RIVER?

WHAT DIFFERENCE WOULD THAT MAKE? SINCE HE PULLED ME OUT OF THE WATER, HE COULDN'T SUSPECT ME OF PUTTING THE MONEY IN THE VALISE!
AND HE NEVER EVEN SAW ME, SO HE COULDN'T SUSPECT ME! I RECKON WE CAN WAIT AROUND THEN!
--BUT SURELY, SHERIFF, YOU DON'T THINK THAT I ROBBED THE BANK, DO YOU?
NO, I DON'T, BUT IF YOU AND BILL WERE THE ONLY TWO PEOPLE ON THE RANCH, WHO DID PUT THE LOOT IN YOUR VALISE?
WAIT! I JUST THOUGHT OF SOMETHING! ON THE WAY TO TOWN, I PULLED A COWBOY OUT OF THE RIVER! SOMEONE COULD HAVE PUT THE MONEY IN THE SUITCASE WHILE I WAS SAVING HIM!
BUT WHY SHOULD THEY WANT TO GET RID OF THE MONEY?
AS THE SHERIFF TOLD ME, THERE WERE LOOKOUTS POSTED, SO THEY COULDN'T LEAVE TOWN WITH THE LOOT! THEY PROBABLY WANT SOMEONE TO CARRY IT OUT OF TOWN! THEN THEY WOULD STEAL IT BACK AGAIN!
BUT HOW COULD THE BANK ROBBERS KNOW ANYONE WAS GOING TO STOP AT THAT SPOT WHERE YOU SAVED THE MAN?
THEY COULDN'T, UNLESS THE DROWNING MAN WAS PART OF THE ACT!
WELL, IF THEY FOLLOWED YOU AND SAW YOU STOP AT THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE, THEY'VE PROBABLY RUN AWAY BY NOW!
WE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO FIND THEM, BUT I DOUBT IF THEY'LL RUN AWAY UNTIL THEY'RE SURE THE SHERIFF KNOWS WHAT'S IN THE VALISE!
HMM, YOU THINK IF THEY SAW SOMEONE LEAVE WITH THE VALISE, THEY'D FOLLOW HIM?
I DO AND I'M MORE THAN WILLING TO TRY IT!
I REALIZE THAT, BILL, BUT I COULDN'T LET YOU RISK YOUR NECK! THAT'S MY JOB!
BUT IF THEY SEE YOU RIDING OFF WITH THE VALISE, THEY MIGHT NOT COME AFTER YOU!
IN THAT CASE, AS SOON AS WE GET BACK TO THE JAILHOUSE, WE'LL SWITCH CLOTHES! AND NO ARGUING! THAT'S AN ORDER!

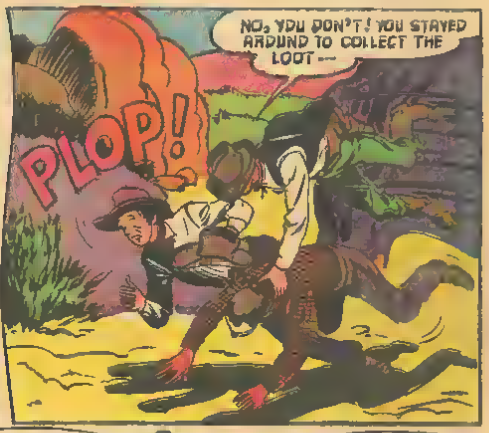
LATER...
THERE GOES BOYD WITH THE VALISE! LET'S FOLLOW HIM!
AS SOON AS HE REACHES THE HILLS WE'LL GRAB THE LOOT BACK AND GET RID OF HIM!
SHORTLY AFTER....
THEY MUST BE THE THIEVING VARMINTS! THEY'VE BEEN FOLLOWING ME EVER SINCE I LEFT TOWN!
WELL, I'LL SOON KNOW! I'LL TAKE THEM BY SURPRISE AS THEY RIDE THROUGH THIS PASS!
BUT AS MINUTES GO BY....
THAT'S FUNNY! THEY HAVEN'T RIDDEN THROUGH! MAYBE THEY WEREN'T THE ONES AND RODE OFF ON A DIFFERENT PATH! I'D BETTER TAKE A LOOK!
BUT AS THE SHERIFF PEEKS OUT....
YUH WERE RIGHT, LAWFORD! HE DID SUSPECT WE WERE FOLLOWING HIM! IT'S A GOOD THING WE SNEAKED UP HERE!
HE WAS FIGURING TO CATCH US AS WE RODE THROUGH, BUT I KNEW HE WAS WAITING FER US WHEN I DIDN'T HEAR HIS HORSE'S HOOF-BEATS!
CONK!!
HEY! THIS ISN'T BOYD! IT'S THE SHERIFF!
WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES THAT MAKE NOW? WE'VE GOT THE LOOT AGAIN! I'LL TAKE IT OUT OF THE VALISE AND THEN WE CAN BEAT IT!
(GULP!) IT'S EMPTY!
THIS WHOLE THING WAS A SETUP TO TRAP US!

HE'LL PAY FER THIS WITH HIS LIFE! HE WAS TOO SMART FOR HIS OWN GOOD!

GO AHEAD AND SHOOT! THEN LET'S GET OUT OF HERE FRONTO!
HERE GOES!

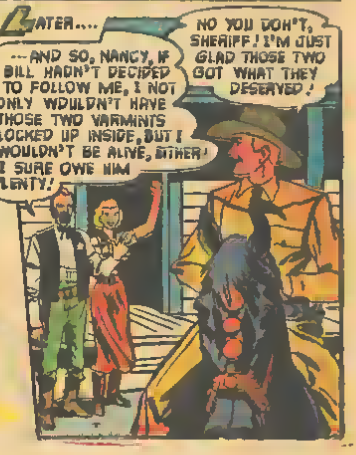
BUT AS LAWFORD IS ABOUT TO SQUEEZE THE TRIGGER.....
HEY! WHO DID THAT?
BANG!

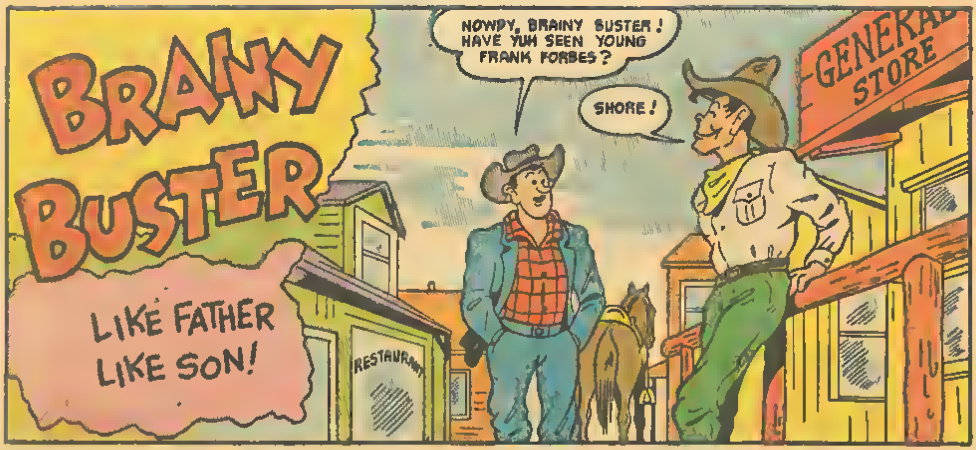
I DID!
IT'S BOYD! RUN FER IT!


NO, YOU DON'T! YOU STAYED AROUND TO COLLECT THE LOOT---
PLOP!

---SO I DON'T WANT TO DISAPPOINT YOU!
UGH!
POW!
BAM!

ONE OF THE ADVANTAGES OF WEARING THE SHERIFF'S CLOTHES IS THAT THEY COME EQUIPPED WITH HANDCUFFS!


LATER....
---AND SO, NANCY, IF BILL HADN'T DECIDED TO FOLLOW ME, I NOT ONLY WOULDN'T HAVE THOSE TWO VARMINTS LOCKED UP INSIDE, BUT I WOULDN'T BE ALIVE, EITHER! I SURE OWE HIM PLENTY!
NO YOU DON'T, SHERIFF! I'M JUST GLAD THOSE TWO GOT WHAT THEY DESERVED!


BRAINY BUSTER
LIKE FATHER LIKE SON!
NOWDY, BRAINY BUSTER! HAVE YUH SEEN YOUNG FRANK FORBES?
SHORE!
GENERAL STORE
RESTAURANT

HE'S IN THE RESTAURANT ACROSS THE STREET!
WHAT! HE'S EATING AGAIN!

YUP! THAT'S ALL THAT HOMBRE DOES! HE EATS ALL DAY!
TSK, TSK, THAT'S THE TRUTH!

HIS FATHER WAS THE SAME WAY! HE ATE ALL THE TIME, TOO!
YUH DON'T SAY!

SHORE! THAT'S WHY WE CALL YOUNG FRANK "HORSE"!
HUH? YUH CALL YOUNG FRANK "HORSE"! WHY?

BECAUSE HE TAKES AFTER HIS FODDER!
HA, HA!

BOYS! GIRLS! LOOK!

Get this 24 K GOLD-PLATED "GOOD LUCK" RING with YOUR OWN INITIALS!

GLEAMING

BIG! AMAZING VALUE! NEVER BEFORE OFFERED!

MASSIVE! EVERY RING MADE TO ORDER!!

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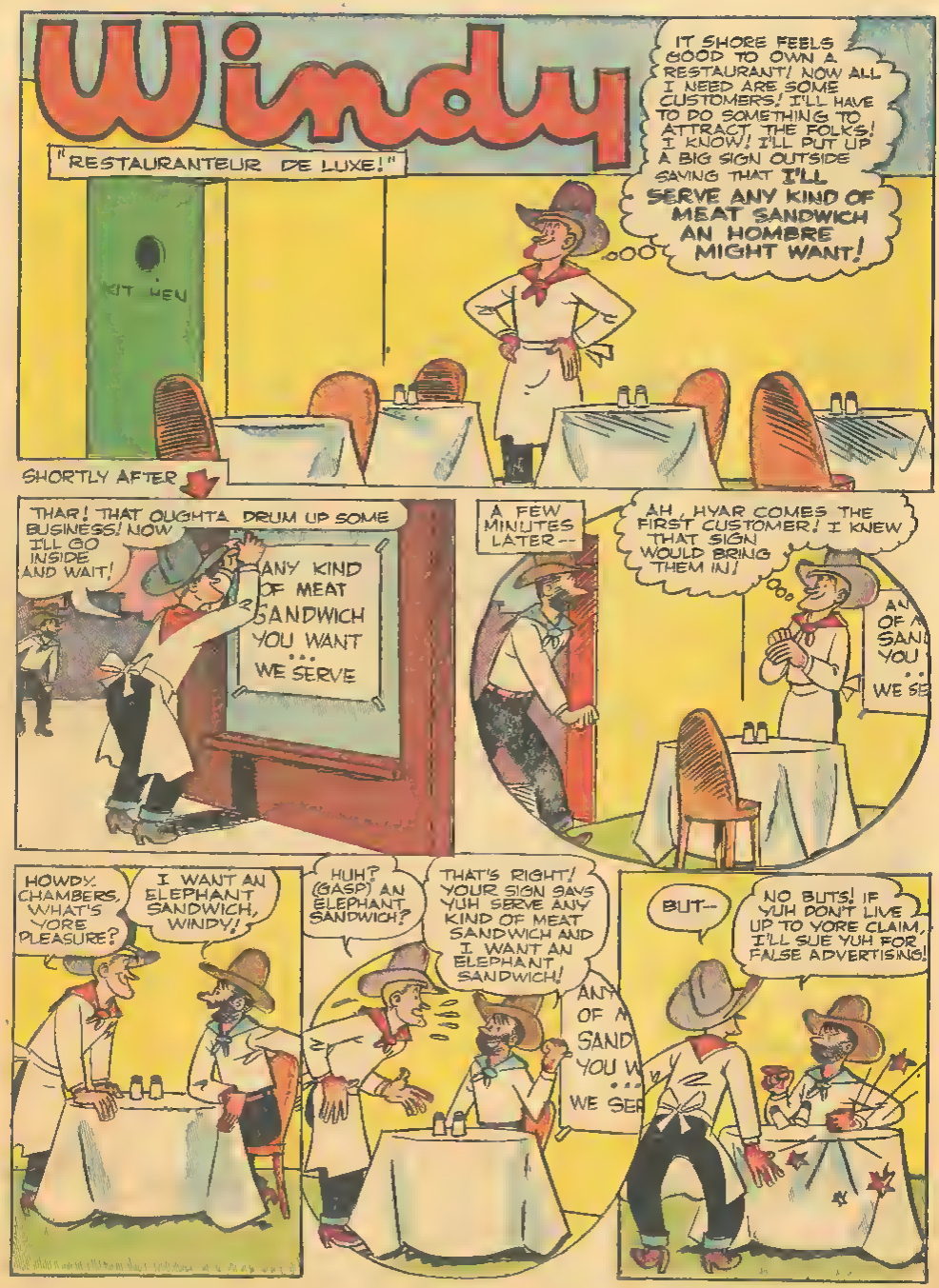
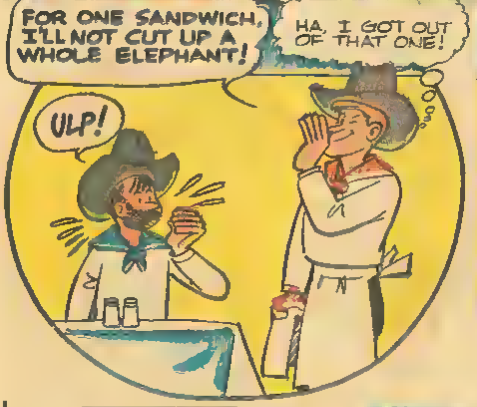
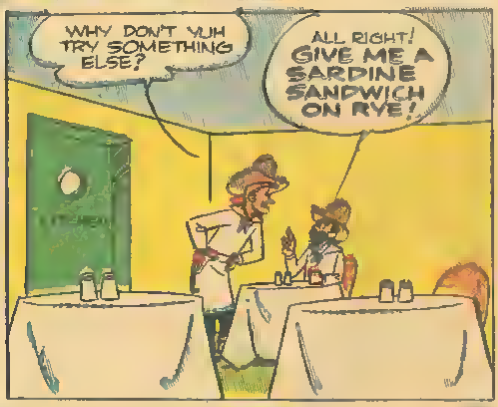

Windy
"RESTAURANTEUR DE LUXE!"
KIT HEN
IT SHORE FEELS GOOD TO OWN A RESTAURANT! NOW ALL I NEED ARE SOME CUSTOMERS! I'LL HAVE TO DO SOMETHING TO ATTRACT THE FOLKS! I KNOW! I'LL PUT UP A BIG SIGN OUTSIDE SAYING THAT I'LL SERVE ANY KIND OF MEAT SANDWICH AN HOMBRE MIGHT WANT!
SHORTLY AFTER
THAR! THAT OUGHTA DRUM UP SOME BUSINESS! NOW I'LL GO INSIDE AND WAIT!
ANY KIND OF MEAT SANDWICH YOU WANT ... WE SERVE
A FEW MINUTES LATER--
AH, HYAR COMES THE FIRST CUSTOMER! I KNEW THAT SIGN WOULD BRING THEM IN!
HOWDY, CHAMBERS, WHAT'S YORE PLEASURE?
I WANT AN ELEPHANT SANDWICH, WINDY!
HUH? (GASP) AN ELEPHANT SANDWICH?
THAT'S RIGHT! YOUR SIGN SAYS YUH SERVE ANY KIND OF MEAT SANDWICH AND I WANT AN ELEPHANT SANDWICH!
BUT--
NO BUTS! IF YUH DON'T LIVE UP TO YORE CLAIM, I'LL SUE YUH FOR FALSE ADVERTISING!

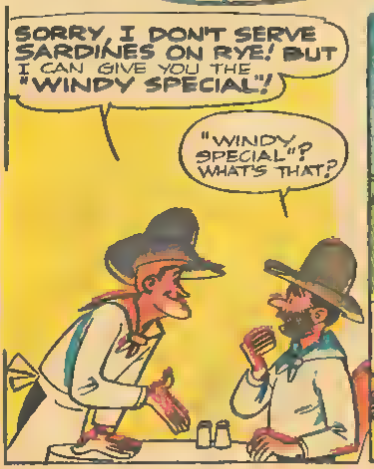
(GULP) WHAT AM I GOING TO DO? I CAN'T GIVE HIM AN ELEPHANT SANDWICH! BUT IF I DON'T, HE'LL SUE ME! WAIT, I HAVE AN IDEA!

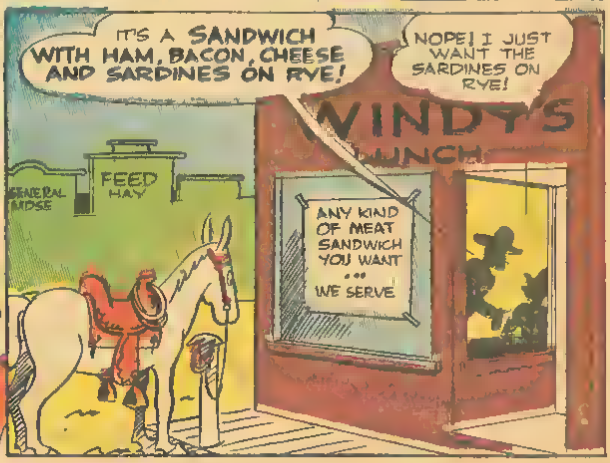
OKAY, OKAY, YUH'LL GET YOUR ELEPHANT SANDWICH! I'LL GO GET IT!

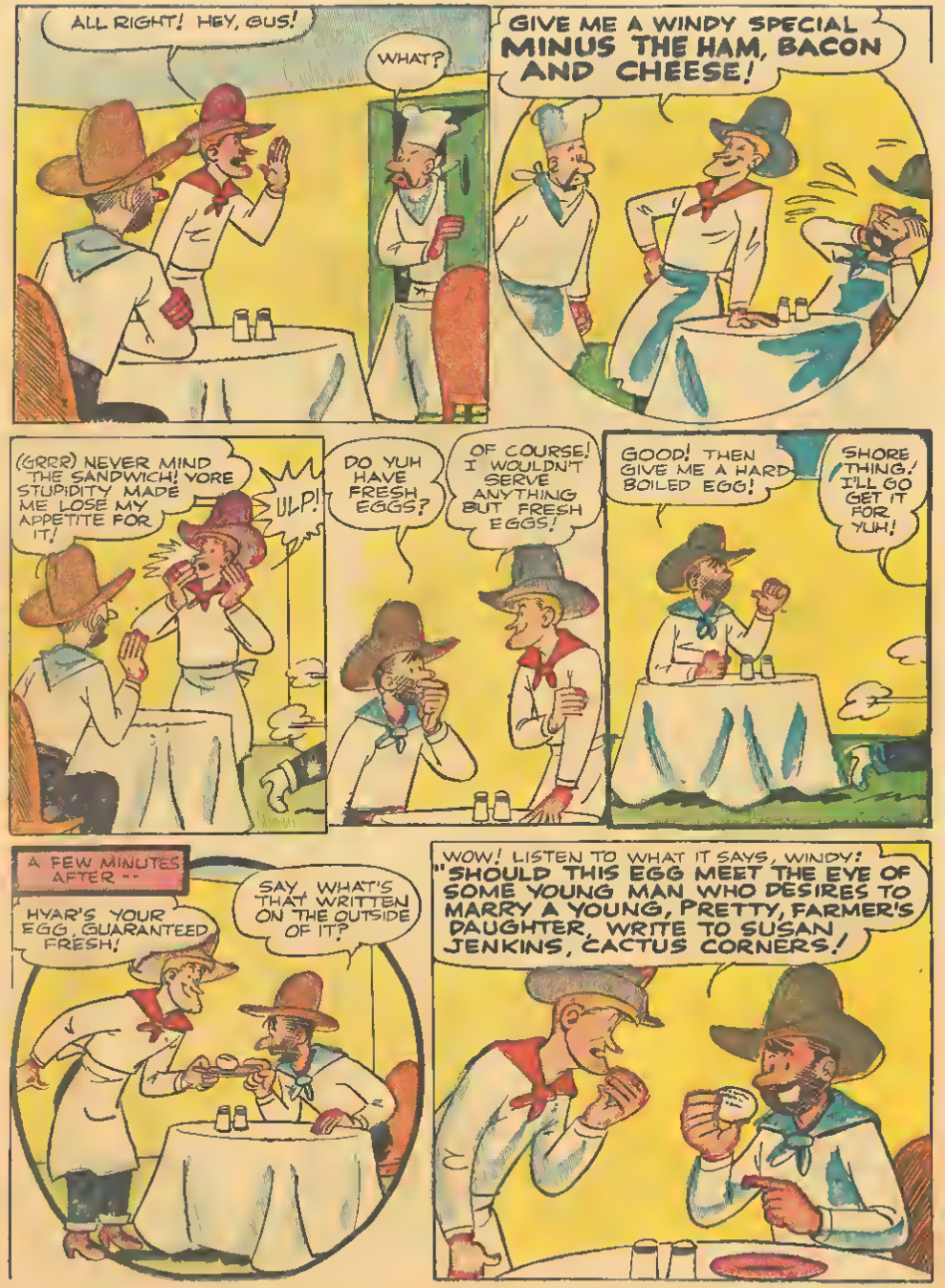
A FEW MOMENTS LATER--
I'M SORRY! I CAN'T SERVE YUH THE ELEPHANT SANDWICH!
HUH? WHY NOT?


FOR ONE SANDWICH, I'LL NOT CUT UP A WHOLE ELEPHANT!
HA, I GOT OUT OF THAT ONE!
ULP!

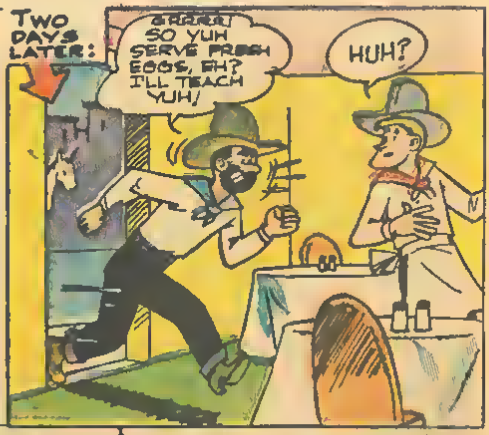

WHY DON'T YUH TRY SOMETHING ELSE?
ALL RIGHT! GIVE ME A SARDINE SANDWICH ON RYE!

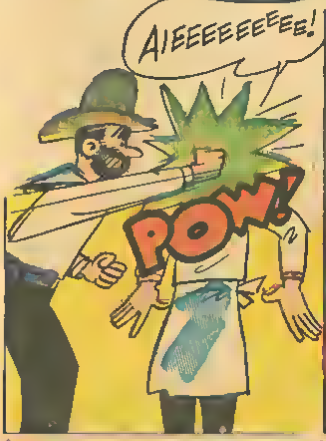

SORRY, I DON'T SERVE SARDINES ON RYE! BUT I CAN GIVE YOU THE "WINDY SPECIAL"!
"WINDY SPECIAL"? WHAT'S THAT?


IT'S A SANDWICH WITH HAM, BACON, CHEESE AND SARDINES ON RYE!
NOPE! I JUST WANT THE SARDINES ON RYE!
WINDY'S
LUNCH
FEED HAY
GENERAL MDSE
ANY KIND OF MEAT SANDWICH YOU WANT ... WE SERVE


ALL RIGHT! HEY, GUS!
WHAT?
GIVE ME A WINDY SPECIAL MINUS THE HAM, BACON AND CHEESE!
(GRRR) NEVER MIND THE SANDWICH! YORE STUPIDITY MADE ME LOSE MY APPETITE FOR IT!
ULP!
DO YUH HAVE FRESH EGGS?
OF COURSE! I WOULDN'T SERVE ANYTHING BUT FRESH EGGS!
GOOD! THEN GIVE ME A HARD BOILED EGG!
SHORE THING! I'LL GO GET IT FOR YUH!
A FEW MINUTES AFTER --
HYAR'S YOUR EGG, GUARANTEED FRESH!
SAY, WHAT'S THAT WRITTEN ON THE OUTSIDE OF IT?
WOW! LISTEN TO WHAT IT SAYS, WINDY: "SHOULD THIS EGG MEET THE EYE OF SOME YOUNG MAN WHO DESIRES TO MARRY A YOUNG, PRETTY, FARMER'S DAUGHTER, WRITE TO SUSAN JENKINS, CACTUS CORNERS.!

BOY, THAT SOUNDS LIKE THE KIND OF GAL I'VE BEEN WAITING TO MEET! AS SOON AS I FINISH THE EGG, I'LL GO WRITE HER A LETTER!

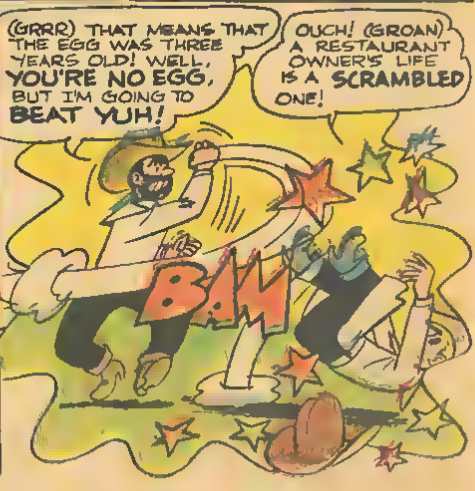

TWO DAYS LATER:
GRRRR! SO YUH SERVE FRESH EGGS, EH? I'LL TEACH YUH!
HUH?


AIEEEEEEEEE!
POW!

(GROAN) WHAT'S THE IDEA OF PUNCHING ME IN THE EYE?
DO YUH REMEMBER THAT EGG YUH SERVED ME THE OTHER DAY WITH THE WRITING ON IT?

YEP! WHAT ABOUT IT?
YUH SAID IT WAS FRESH, REMEMBER? WELL, I SENT A NOTE TO THE GAL WHO HAD WRITTEN IT! AND I GOT A LETTER FROM HER TODAY!

SHE SAID I WROTE TOO LATE. SHE'S BEEN MARRIED THREE YEARS SINCE SHE WROTE ON THAT EGG!
ULP!


(GRRR) THAT MEANS THAT THE EGG WAS THREE YEARS OLD! WELL, YOU'RE NO EGG, BUT I'M GOING TO BEAT YUH!
OUCH! (GROAN) A RESTAURANT OWNER'S LIFE IS A SCRAMBLED ONE!
BAM

Bill Boyd and The STORM REFUGE

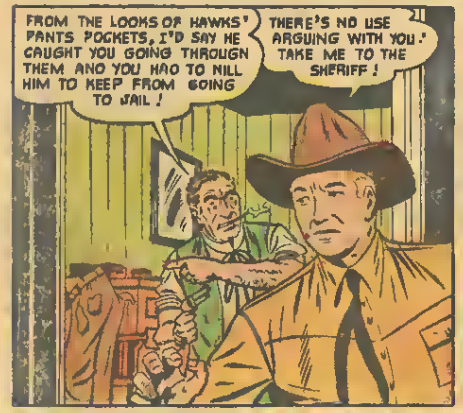
THAT WAS TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT! I THINK WE'D BETTER PUT UP FOR THE NIGHT AT THAT INN UP AHEAD, MIDNITE! THE STORM SHOULD BLOW OVER BY MORNING!

SWISH!

BUT THIS STORM'S TOO BAD TO RIDE IN! CAN'T YOU FIND SOME NOOK FOR ME? I JUST FINISHED A JOB AND I'M WILLING TO PAY EXTRA!
MONEY'S NOT THE OBJECT, SIR! WE JUST DON'T HAVE ANY EMPTY ROOMS! THAT IS...
...UNLESS YUH WANT TO SHARE A ROOM WITH ONE OF THE OTHER GUESTS!
I WOULDN'T OBJECT, BUT PERHAPS HE WOULD!
DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT! JACK HAWKS HAS THIS ROOM AND HE WON'T MIND!
IN FACT, HE'S SUCH A SOUND SLEEPER, IF YUH LEAVE BEFORE HE GETS UP, HE'LL NEVER EVEN KNOW YUH WERE IN HYAR!
WELL, IF YOU DON'T THINK HE'LL MIND, I'LL HOP RIGHT INTO THE OTHER BED AND GET SOME SLEEP!
SLEEP TIGHT! I'LL WAKE YUH REAL EARLY!
THE NEXT MORNING...
OH, GOOD MORNING! I WAS JUST COMING TO WAKE YUH!
THANKS! I GOT UP A SHORT WHILE AGO! I'M JUST FINISHING DRESSING!
HEY! WHAT'S THIS? JACK HAWKS IS COVERED WITH BLOOD!
BLOOD??
(GULP!) HE'S DEAD!
BUT HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE?

THAT'S WHAT I WANT YOU TO TELL ME! YOU WERE THE ONLY JASPER IN THIS ROOM WITH HIM!
HOLD ON! YOU DON'T BELIEVE I KILLED HIM?

I DON'T THINK ANYTHING ELSE BUT! PUT YOUR HANDS UP! NO WONDER YOU WERE UP BEFORE I CALLED YOU! YOU WERE AIMING TO ESCAPE!
BUT WHY SHOULD I KILL HIM? I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW HIM!


FROM THE LOOKS OF HAWKS' PANTS POCKETS, I'D SAY HE CAUGHT YOU GOING THROUGH THEM AND YOU HAD TO KILL HIM TO KEEP FROM GOING TO JAIL!
THERE'S NO USE ARGUING WITH YOU! TAKE ME TO THE SHERIFF!

WHY WASTE TIME WITH A SHERIFF? I AIM TO DO BETTER THAN THAT! I'M GOING TO ROUND UP THE REST OF THE GUESTS AND HAVE THEM LYNCH YOU RIGHT AWAY!
YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO TAKE THE LAW INTO YOUR OWN HANDS!

THIS SIX-SHOOTER GIVES ME THE RIGHT--UNLESS YOU'D LIKE TO MAKE A DEAL!
DEAL?

THAT'S RIGHT! YOU GIVE ME ALL THE MONEY YOU'VE GOT AND I'LL LET YOU GO FREE!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN FREE? AS SOON AS THE SHERIFF FINDS OUT ABOUT THE DEAD MAN, HE'LL BE AFTER ME!

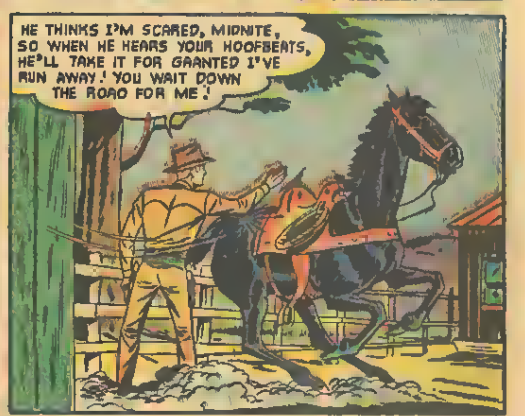
THE SHERIFF WILL NEVER FIND OUT ABOUT HAWKS! I'LL BURY THE BODY WHERE IT'LL NEVER BE FOUND! IS IT A DEAL? YOU'VE GOT TO ACT FAST BEFORE THE OTHER GUESTS GET UP!
OKAY! IT'S A DEAL!

A FEW MINUTES LATER...
NOW RIDE AWAY AS FAR AS YOU CAN FROM HYAR AND AS FAST AS YOU CAN, TOO!
I SURE WILL! MY HORSE, MIDNITE, IS THE FASTEST THING ON FOUR LEGS!
WHAT'S THIS? JUSTICE'S NUMBER ONE FIGHTER, BILL BOYD, BUYS HIS WAY OUT OF A TOUGH SPOT, AND NOW HE'S RUNNING AWAY FROM AN UNSOLVED MURDER!

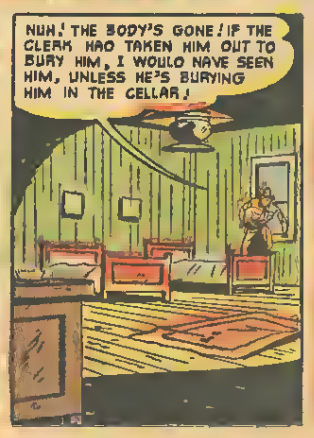
I HAD TO PLAY ALONG WITH THE CLERK IN ORDER TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THIS WEIRD MESS! AT FIRST I BELIEVED HE THOUGHT I KILLED HAWKS, BUT WHEN HE WAS AFRAID TO TURN ME OVER TO THE SHERIFF, I REALIZED SOMETHING PHONY WAS GOING ON! BUT WHAT?

OF COURSE HE MIGHT HAVE KILLED HAWKS BEFORE I ARRIVED AND SUGGESTED PUTTING ME THE ROOM SO HE COULD PUT THE BLAME ON ME!

BUT IF HE WERE LOOKING FOR A FALL GUY, HE WOULDN'T HAVE LET ME BUY MY FREEDOM! IF I'M GOING TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THIS, I'LL HAVE TO STAY AROUND, BUT OUT OF SIGHT!


HE THINKS I'M SCARED, MIDNITE, SO WHEN HE HEARS YOUR HOOFBEATS, HE'LL TAKE IT FOR GRANTED I'VE RUN AWAY! YOU WAIT DOWN THE ROAD FOR ME!

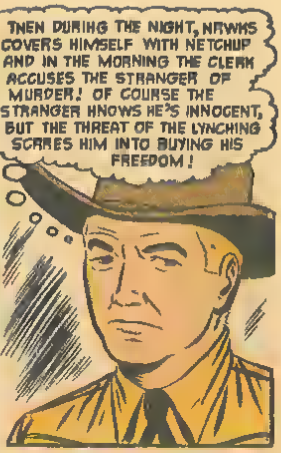
NOW TO CLIMB BACK INTO THAT ROOM SO I CAN HAVE A CLOSER LOOK AT HAWKS' BODY!


NUH! THE BODY'S GONE! IF THE CLERK HAD TAKEN HIM OUT TO BURY HIM, I WOULD HAVE SEEN HIM, UNLESS HE'S BURYING HIM IN THE CELLAR!

IF HE DID BURY HIM BELOW, HE MUST HAVE DONE IT ALREADY BECAUSE THERE HE IS NOW! I'D LIKE TO HAVE A LOOK IN THE CELLAR! I HOPE I CAN SNEAK DOWN WITHOUT HIS HEARING ME!

HE DIDN'T NOTICE ME! GOOD! NOW TO SEE IF I CAN FIND ANY TRACE OF THE BODY!

BUT THERE'S MORE THAN A TRACE OF THE BODY!
HE'S ALIVE! NOW I UNDERSTAND WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT! HE AND THE CLERK ARE IN THIS TOGETHER! WHENEVER A STRANGER STOPS IN, THE CLERK SAYS THERE'S NO ROOM AND SUGGESTS SHARING ONE WITH HAWKS!


THEN DURING THE NIGHT, HAWKS COVERS HIMSELF WITH KETCHUP AND IN THE MORNING THE CLERK ACCUSES THE STRANGER OF MURDER! OF COURSE THE STRANGER KNOWS HE'S INNOCENT, BUT THE THREAT OF THE LYNCHING SCARES HIM INTO BUYING HIS FREEDOM!

THIS KETCHUP IS SURE GETTING HARDER AND HARDER TO WASH OUT!
YOU WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THAT ANY LONGER! PUT YOUR HANDS UP!

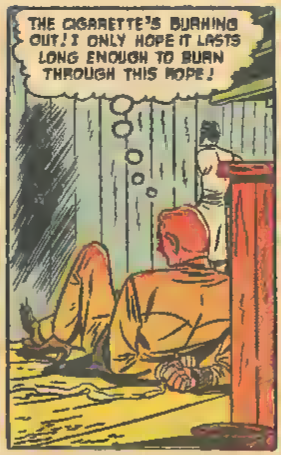
IT'S YUH! I THOUGHT IT WAS THE CLERK!
PUT YOUR HANDS UP!

YOU PUT YOUR HANDS UP! I THOUGHT I HEARD SOMEONE GOING DOWN THE CELLAR STEPS!
IT'S LUCKY YUH DID!

IT'S TOO BAD YOU DIDN'T JUST RUN OFF SCARED LIKE ALL THE OTHERS WE PULLED THIS RACKET ON! NOW YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO DIE! TIE HIM UP, HAWKS!
THAT'S WHAT I'M AIMING TO DO!

A SHOT WILL MAKE THE REGULAR GUESTS SUSPICIOUS, SO I'LL GO GET SOME CEMENT AND WE'LL PUT HIM IN ONE OF THE CLOSETS AND PLASTER HIM IN!
THAT'S A GOOD IDEA! HE'LL SUFFOCATE IN NO TIME AND WE WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT GETTING RID OF THE BODY!

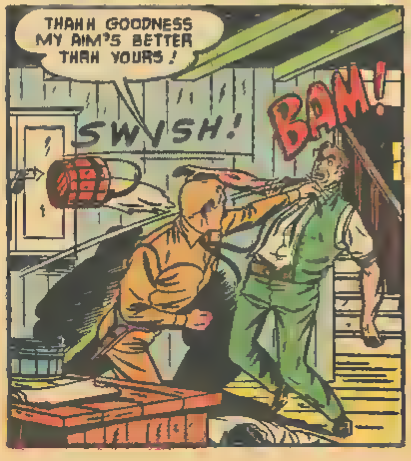
IF I CAN ONLY REACH THAT CIGARETTE BEFORE THE CLERK RETURNS WITH THE CEMENT!

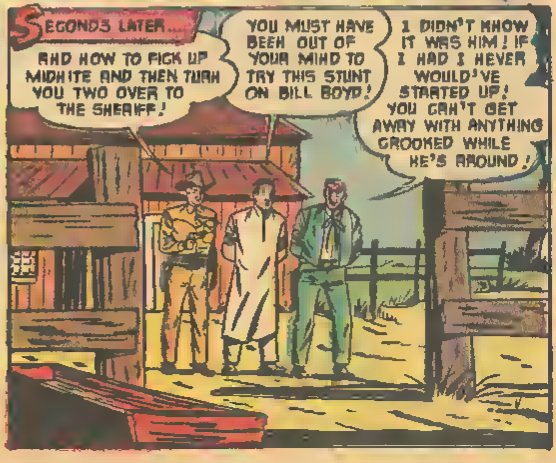

THE CIGARETTE'S BURNING OUT! I ONLY HOPE IT LASTS LONG ENOUGH TO BURN THROUGH THIS ROPE!

I'VE GOT THE CEMENT! BRING HIM OVER TO THE CLOSET!
OKAY!

HEY, HE FREED HIMSELF!
GRAB HIM!

MAYBE YOU'D LIKE TO TRY GRABBING ME AS SOON AS I TAKE CARE OF YOUR PAL HERE!
UGH!
POW!
YOU WON'T GET ME! I'LL BURY YOUR HEAD IN THIS CEMENT!

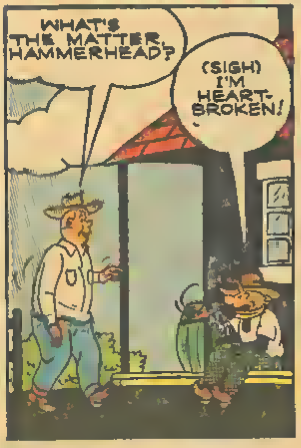

THANK GOODNESS MY AIM'S BETTER THAN YOURS!
SWISH!
BAM!

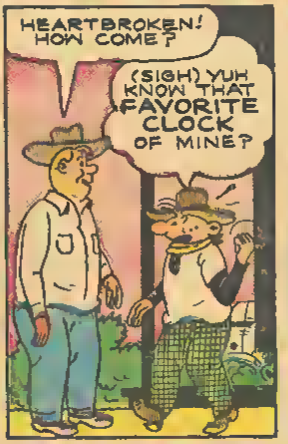

SECONDS LATER...
AND HOW TO PICK UP MIDNITE AND THEN TURN YOU TWO OVER TO THE SHERIFF!
YOU MUST HAVE BEEN OUT OF YOUR MIND TO TRY THIS STUNT ON BILL BOYD!
I DIDN'T KNOW IT WAS HIM! IF I HAD I NEVER WOULD'VE STARTED UP! YOU CAN'T GET AWAY WITH ANYTHING CROOKED WHILE HE'S AROUND!

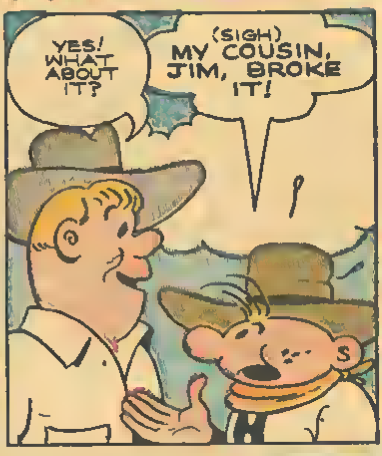
BILL BOYD WESTERN

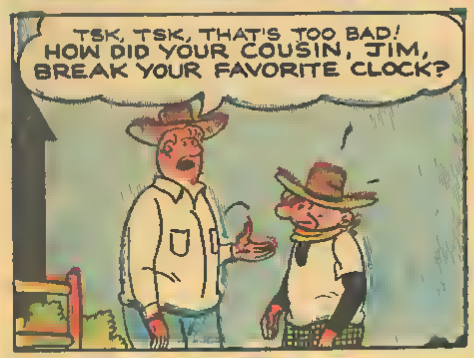
HAMMER HEAD

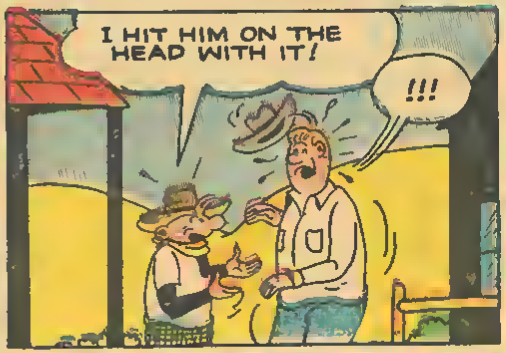
SAD TIME











THE WOULD-BE SHERIFF

By Eando Binder

"WE'RE right on his trail," said Sheriff Stone, leaning over his boree and squinting at the tracke on the ground. "I've been after Owlhoot Otie for months and thie time I'm going to corner that sidewinder."

"Yeh, we'll get him!" echoed Randy Watson, twirling his gun.

Sheriff Stone turned to stare curiously at his companion Randy Watson wae a young, eager-faced cowpuncher who took this all ae a thrilling adventure instead of a grim game with a desperado and death.

"Are you eure you want to come along with me?" the sheriff asked once more. "Owlhoot Otis ie a killer. He's been looting and killing like a mad dog When we catch up to bim, he isn't going to smile sweetly and give up. He's going to fight like a wild animal. Maybe you'd better go home now and . . ."

"Save your breath, sheriff!" Randy interrupted "I've got time off from the ranch right now. And I don't want to be a cowpuncher all my life I want to be a sheriff someday, and I figger learning this business from you is the best training I could get."

Sheriff Stone heeitated, but he couldn't reeist the appeal in the young cowpoke's face and voice. "Let's go," he said grimly. "Owlhoot Otis has a tired horse and we're gaining on him."

The trail was plain—too plain. Stone was puzzled about tbat The cunning badman usually left very little, if any, trail. It waen't long before they saw tbe horseman ahead, topping a rise far off

"There's the coyote!" yelled Randy, raising himself in the saddle for a better look.

"Look out!" snapped Stone, pulling Randy by the arm juet in time A sharp report eounded and a bullet whined, taking off Randy's hat, spinning it to the dirt.

"See what I meant before?" Stone said quietly, to tbe white-faced young cowboy. "Owlhoot Otie is playing this game for keeps. Are you game to go on?"

"Sure," grinned Randy, "I'm learning I'll ba a real good eheriff, with leseons from you Let'e corral that gunelick now."

Hard riding brought the two pursuers cloeer to the fleeing desperado. "He's caught in open eountry," gloated Randy. "No woods or hille ahead. Kind of dumb on hie part."

"That's tha funny thing," mueed Stone, frowning. "He could have forked off into timberland before. Why didn't he? There'e sometbing loco about this whole thing . . ."

"Look!" yelled Randy, spurring his cayuse forward. "He'e heading for that cave We got him holed up. Yayyyyy!"

"Wait!" Stone answered. "Now I get it. Stop, Randy—!"

But it was too lata. Randy couldn't hear, and he was racing for the cava mouth. Muttering, the eheriff could only follow. The mouth of the cave wae big and they both galloped into the gloomy cavern. Almoet immediately shote rang out from the ehadows ahaad.

"Off your horee!" Stona criad, at laet making himself heard. "He's bushwbacking us!"

They flung themselvas off tbeir mounts, erouching in shadow. Randy's face was bewildered. "You mean he s ambuehing *us* here?"

"Yeh, you young fool," Stone hissed back. "You led ue right into hie trap! Don't you see? Owlhoot Otis wanted to get me out of the way eo he cooked up this wild goosa chase, leaving a plain trail. Now the question is, bow do we get out of here—alive?"

"Why, we can just run out," Randy said unthinkingly, jumping up. Bullets almoet clipped him, but Stone yanked him back.

"How did you ever live *this* long?" Stone asked bitingly. "Don't you realize that anybody running out of tha cave, with the etrong light outlining him, givee Owlhoot a deaö bead? He had this all figured out in advance. He probably explored the cave before and knows it like a book. He can stalk us like animals . . ."

Even at the moment another ehot rang out from the hido- outlaw, from another direction, hitting so close that chipe of rock etung their facee.

And then wild laughter curdled their blood, achoing hollowly somewhere in the gloom beyond them. It was tbe mad, gloating laugh of

the killer himself. "Howdy, Sheriff Stone!" came his mocking voice. "Welcome to Crystal Cave. You walked into my trap like a baby. I got this cave mapped like my own backyard. I'll sneak up behind you in the dark, sooner or later, and shoot you down like a polecat. And the same with that ranny with you, whoever he is. Run, Sheriff! Run for your life! See if you can escape me!"

Another shot exploded in the shadows and again a bullet sang its song of death near them. Randy moaned in panic and tried to jump up, but Stone dragged him down firmly. "Back deeper into the cave," he whispered. "It's our only hope. Follow me. Don't make any noise."

But it was impossible not to make noise in the tomblike silence as they crawled between stalagmites of the huge cavern, with its crystalline stone formations glinting dully around them. Also bats were disturbed and twittered as they flew off. A dead giveaway to their movements.

But strangely, no further shots came from their deadly bushwhacker. Instead, his voice rang out mockingly again. "Hiding back there, ah? Good! You see, that's part of my plan too. I'm eleeling out to the open air. My next job is going to be robbing the express stage. And you won't stop me, Sheriff. Know why? Because you're going to *die* in this cave! You see, I've got the cave mouth all *dynamited,* ready to go off."

It was only a few moments later that the thundering blast flung Stone and Randy off their feet. Picking themselves up, they staggered toward the mouth of the cave. It was all caved in with tons of rock, completely sealing them inside!

"Buried alive!" groaned Randy, sinking to his knees in horror. "We can never dig our way out. It's our tomb now!"

"Well, I warned you it might end this way," said Stone pityingly. "Too bad you're sharing death with me This trap was planned only for me, not you, kid . . ."

"That's the worst of it!" Randy said, agonized. "I'm the *cause* of all this. I insisted on going with you, and then I forced you into this trap. Alone, you would have been too smart to get tricked. I've done everything wrong— everything. Even if I got out of this alive, I'd never make a good sheriff. I'm too dumb."

"Forget it," said Stone. "All we can do now is search for another way out."

They found pieces of wood lying around and lit them as torches, lighting up the darkness. But an hour later, exploring the cave, it came to a dead end of blank rock.

"No other way out," Stone murmured. "Our horses ran out before. We have no food or water."

"We're sunk!" Randy choked. "We'll die here."

Stone shivered. "Cold down here. Well, no sense freezing to death. Let's build a fire."

They warmed themselves over the big blaze. Suddenly, Randy's eyes glowed strangely, with hope. "Sheriff!" he exclaimed. "Why isn't this closed-in space filling up with smoke, choking us? Where does the smoke go? Hey, look! It's going up—up into that narrow crevice above our heads. It must lead to open air!"

Randy was right. Standing on Stone's shoulders, he was able to hoist himself into the crevice, pulling the sheriff up after him. It was a rugged climb upward through the winding crack but at last they crawled free into open air and glorious sunshine.

Neither of them could say a word. They only looked back at what had nearly been their tomb, shuddering.

Their horses were grazing not far off.

A SHORT while later, Owlhoot Otis was the most surprised badman in the west when the two figures appeared out of nowhere, outshooting and capturing him just as he stopped the express stagecoach for robbery.

"Ghosts!" he yelped first, until Randy's hard fist proved otherwise. "How did you durn hombres escape that cave?"

Stone answered smiling, patting the young cowpuncher's shoulder. "Randy here did it. He'll be a good sheriff someday. I'm proud of him. He used his brains and figured out that smoke follows any current of air out of a closed place. Yes, sir, due to Randy's smart thinking, that smoke saved us!"

Sheriff Stone neglected to mention one small thing—that that was the reason he had built the roaring fire in the first place!

THE END

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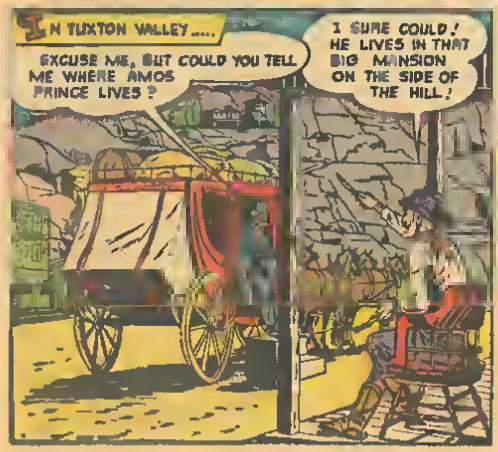
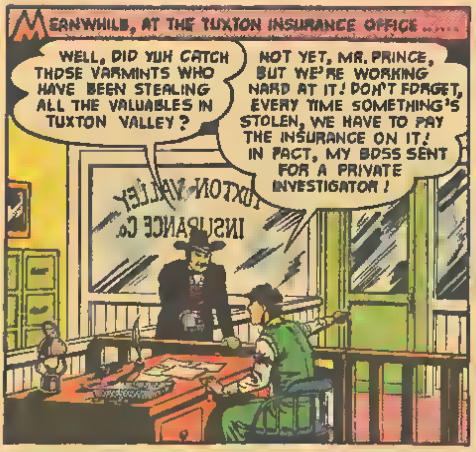
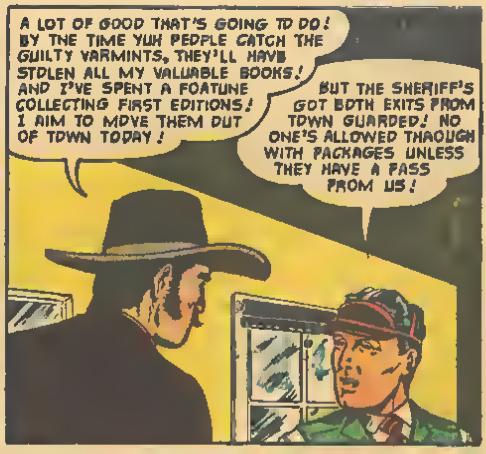
CONK!

UGH!




MEANWHILE, AT THE TUXTON INSURANCE OFFICE .....
WELL, DID YUH CATCH THOSE VARMINTS WHO HAVE BEEN STEALING ALL THE VALUABLES IN TUXTON VALLEY?
NOT YET, MR. PRINCE, BUT WE'RE WORKING HARD AT IT! DON'T FORGET, EVERY TIME SOMETHING'S STOLEN, WE HAVE TO PAY THE INSURANCE ON IT! IN FACT, MY BOSS SENT FOR A PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR!

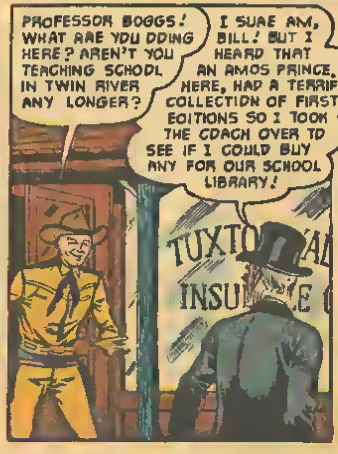

A LOT OF GOOD THAT'S GOING TO DO! BY THE TIME YUH PEOPLE CATCH THE GUILTY VARMINTS, THEY'LL HAVE STOLEN ALL MY VALUABLE BOOKS! AND I'VE SPENT A FORTUNE COLLECTING FIRST EDITIONS! I AIM TO MOVE THEM OUT OF TOWN TODAY!
BUT THE SHERIFF'S GOT BOTH EXITS FROM TOWN GUARDED! NO ONE'S ALLOWED THROUGH WITH PACKAGES UNLESS THEY HAVE A PASS FROM US!

THEN YUH'D BETTER WRITE OUT A PASS FER ME! IF THOSE BOOKS ARE STOLEN, YUH'LL HAVE TO PAY THE INSURANCE ON THEM AND I REKCON YUH DON'T WANT TO DO THAT!
YOU REKCON RIGHT! HERE'S A PASS OUT OF TOWN FER YOUR BOOKS!

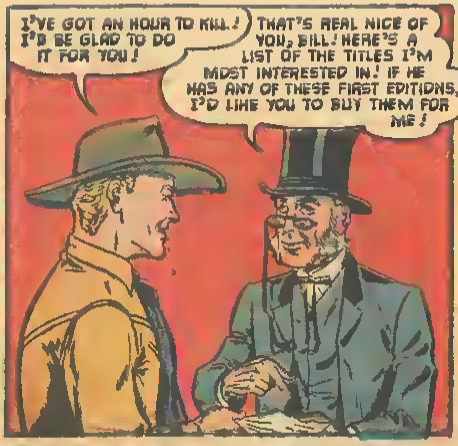
MY NAME'S BILL BOYD! YOUR BOSS SENT FOR ME!
HE SURE DID, MR. BOYD! THERE'S BEEN A WAVE OF ROBBERIES IN TOWN AND HE'D LIKE TO HIRE YUH AS SPECIAL INVESTIGATOR FOR OUR INSURANCE COMPANY TO HELP FIND THE GUILTY HOMBRES!

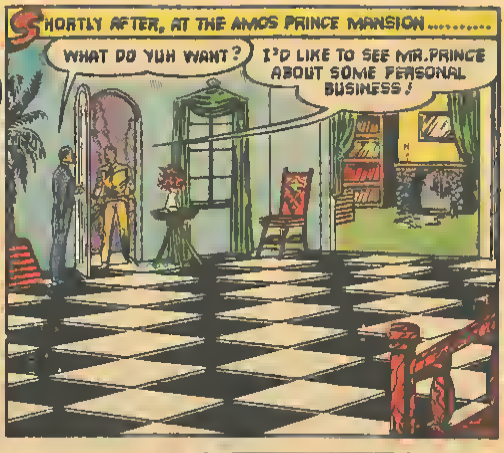
THAT SOUNDS LIKE A MIGHTY INTERESTING JOB!
I KNEW YUH'D BE INTERESTED! THE ONLY TROUBLE IS THE BOSS WON'T BE BACK FER AN HOUR TO TALK OVER TERMS WITH YUH!

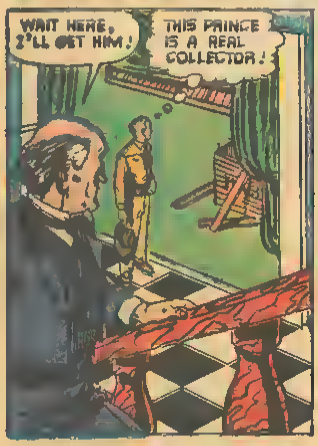
IN THAT CASE, I'LL BE BACK IN AN HOUR! I'LL GO HAVE SOMETHING TO EAT IN THE MEANWHILE!


PROFESSOR BOGGS! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? AREN'T YOU TEACHING SCHOOL IN TWIN RIVER ANY LONGER?
I SURE AM, BILL! BUT I HEARD THAT AN AMOS PRINCE, HERE, HAD A TERRIFIC COLLECTION OF FIRST EDITIONS SO I TOOK THE COACH OVER TO SEE IF I COULD BUY ANY FOR OUR SCHOOL LIBRARY!

BUT YOUR REPUTATION AS A BIBLIOPHILE IS SO WELL-KNOWN, THE MOMENT PRINCE SEES YOU HE'LL JACK UP THE PRICE ON ANY BOOK YOU WANTED!
THAT'S WHAT I'M AFRAID OF! AND THAT'S WHY I'M LOOKING FOR SOMEONE TO GO UP TO HIS MANSION TO BUY THE BOOKS FOR ME!


I'VE GOT AN HOUR TO KILL! I'D BE GLAD TO DO IT FOR YOU!
THAT'S REAL NICE OF YOU, BILL! HERE'S A LIST OF THE TITLES I'M MOST INTERESTED IN! IF HE HAS ANY OF THESE FIRST EDITIONS, I'D LIKE YOU TO BUY THEM FOR ME!


SHORTLY AFTER, AT THE AMOS PRINCE MANSION.....
WHAT DO YUH WANT?
I'D LIKE TO SEE MR. PRINCE ABOUT SOME PERSONAL BUSINESS!


WAIT HERE, I'LL GET HIM!
THIS PRINCE IS A REAL COLLECTOR!

LOOK AT ALL THE BOOKS HE HAS! I WONDER IF ANY OF THE TITLES PROFESSOR BOGGS IS LOOKING FOR ARE HERE?
FRAGIL

WHAT DO YUH THINK YO'RE DOING?
UH--ER -- JUST LOOKING AT ONE OF THE BOOKS!

MY MAN TOLD YUH TO WAIT IN THE FOYER! DON'T YUH UNDERSTAND ENGLISH!
I DIDN'T THINK THERE WAS ANY HARM IN LOOKING AT THE BOOKS! BESIDES I'M HERE TO TRY TO BUY SOME FROM YOU!

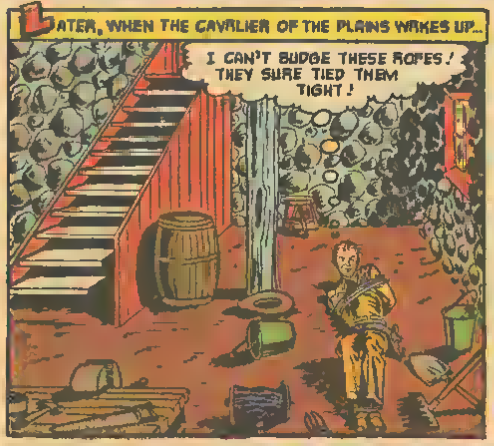
MY BOOKS ARE NOT FOR SALE! MY MAN WILL SHOW YUH OUT THE BACK WAY!
THE BACK WAY!?

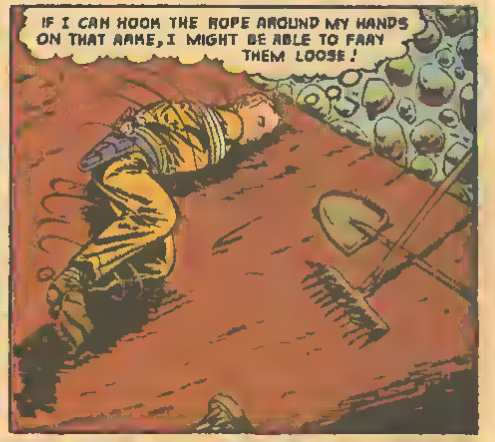
YUH HEARD ME-- THE BACK WAY! NOW GET GOING!
THIS IS YOUR HOUSE SO I'LL HAVE TO DO AS YOU SAY, BUT YOU'D NEVER TALK TO ME THIS WAY ON THE STREET!

AND AS BILL FOLLOWS THE SERVANT...
GEE, BOSS, WE GOT TIRED CRATING THE BOOKS SO WE DIDN'T THINK YUH'D MIND IF WE TOOK A LITTLE REST!
NEVER MIND THAT, JACK! THAT HOMBRE I SAW IN THE INSURANCE OFFICE WAS JUST HERE! HE MUST KNOW SOMETHING! HE CAN'T LEAVE HERE ALIVE!

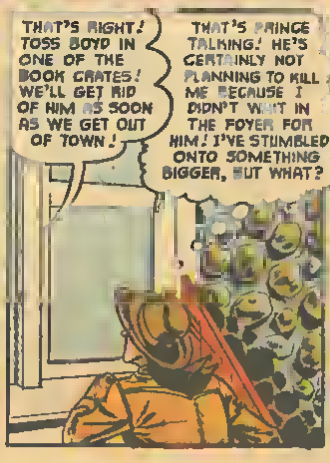
I SENT HIM OUT THE BACK WAY WHICH WILL GIVE YUH AND SETH TIME TO CUT HIM OFF! GET GOING!
OKAY, PRINCE! YUH CAN COUNT ON US!

AND AS BILL BOYD WALKS FROM THE BACK TO THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE TO GET HIS HORSE, MIDNITE.. . . . . .
UGH!
CONK!


LATER, WHEN THE CAVALIER OF THE PLAINS WAKES UP...
I CAN'T BUDGE THESE ROPES! THEY SURE TIED THEM TIGHT!


IF I CAN HOOK THE ROPE AROUND MY HANDS ON THAT RAKE, I MIGHT BE ABLE TO FRAY THEM LOOSE!

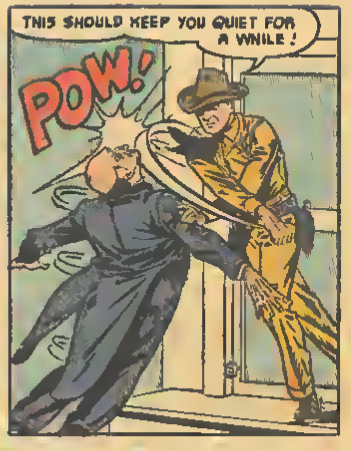
IT WORKED! NOW TO GET THE REST OF THE ROPE OFF ME! AND THEN TO FIND OUT WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT!
RIP!


THAT'S RIGHT! TOSS BOYD IN ONE OF THE BOOK CRATES! WE'LL GET RID OF HIM AS SOON AS WE GET OUT OF TOWN!
THAT'S PRINCE TALKING! HE'S CERTAINLY NOT PLANNING TO KILL ME BECAUSE I DIDN'T WAIT IN THE FOYER FOR HIM! I'VE STUMBLED ONTO SOMETHING BIGGER, BUT WHAT?

GO GET HIM NOW!
YES, BOSS!

HUH! HE'S NOT HERE! I'D BETTER CALL PRINCE!

BUT BEFORE HE CAN CALL OUT.....
NO, YOU DON'T! I'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF THIS CELLAR MY OWN WAY SO I CAN FIND OUT WHAT'S GOING ON HERE!


THIS SHOULD KEEP YOU QUIET FOR A WHILE!
POW!

NOW, IF THE COAST IS CLEAR, I'M HEADING BACK INTO THE LIBRARY! PRINCE WAS CERTAINLY PUT OUT BECAUSE I TOUCHED ONE OF HIS BOOKS AND I INTEND TO FIND OUT WHY!

BUT AS BILL BOYD REACHES THE LIBRARY.....
UNTIL I HAVE SOME DEFINITE PROOF OF WHAT THEY'RE UP TO, I DON'T WANT TO GRAB THEM AND TIP MY HAND!

BANG! BANG!
THIS SHOULD GET THEM OUT OF THE ROOM FOR A FEW MINUTES!

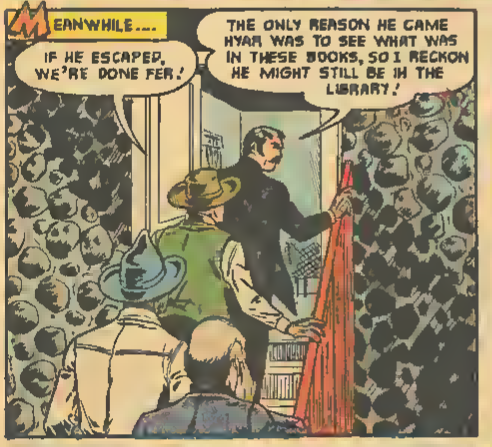
THERE MUST BE TROUBLE IN THE CELLAR! WE'D BETTER GO SEE!
THAT'S JUST WHAT I WAS HOPING THEY'D THINK!

NOW TO HAVE A CLOSER LOOK AT SOME OF THESE BOOKS!
FRAGILE
FRAG

WHAT'S THIS? IT'S NOT A BOOK AT ALL! IT'S JUST A COVER WITH JEWELS INSIDE!

PRINCE MUST BE THE CROOK THE INSURANCE COMPANY WAS HIRING ME TO FIND!

THESE BOOKS ARE NOTHING BUT A HIDING PLACE FOR THE LOOT HE AND HIS MEN HAVE BEEN STEALING FROM THE CITIZENS IN TUXTON VALLEY!


MEANWHILE....
IF HE ESCAPED, WE'RE DONE FER!
THE ONLY REASON HE CAME HYAR WAS TO SEE WHAT WAS IN THESE BOOKS, SO I RECKON HE MIGHT STILL BE IN THE LIBRARY!

QUIET, NOW! IF HE'S IN THERE, WE WANT TO TAKE HIM BY SURPRISE!

I'LL JUST CLOSE UP THIS BOOK AND MAKE IT LOOK AS IF I WEREN'T HERE! THEN AS THEY COME BACK, I CAN CATCH THEM OFF GUARD!

OKAY, MEN! THIS TIME WE WON'T WAIT FER LATER! SHOOT HIM DOWN NOW!

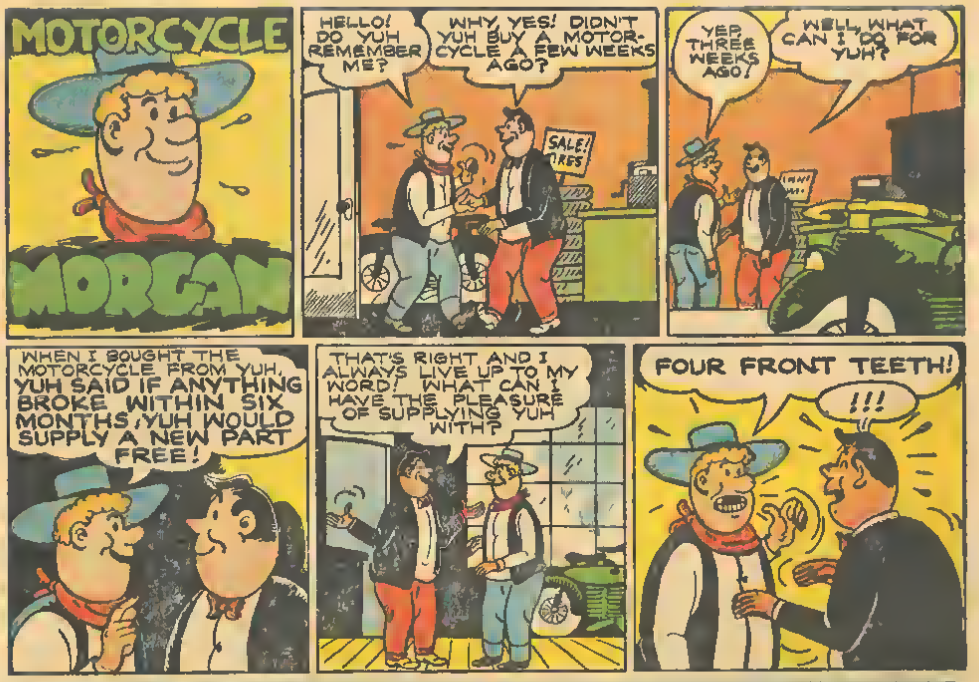
BUT WITH LIGHTNING SPEED, BILL BOYD OUTDRAWS AND SHOOTS FIRST!
BANG!
BANG!
BANG!
BANG!

NOW JUST RAISE YOUR HANDS WHILE I TIE YOU TOGETHER!

SECONDS LATER....
NOW START WALKING TOWARD THE JAILHOUSE!

AND AFTER BILL DELIVERS THE OUTLAWS TO THE SHERIFF.....
GOSH, BILL, YOU CAUGHT THE VARMINTS BEFORE MY BOSS GOT BACK TO MAKE A DEAL WITH YOU!
PROFESSOR BOGGS DESERVES HALF THE CREDIT! IF HE HADN'T SENT ME UP TO BUY THOSE BOOKS, PRINCE WOULD HAVE BEEN OUT OF TOWN BEFORE WE COULD HAVE DISCOVERED ANYTHING!

TELL YOUR BOSS TO GIVE THE PROFESSOR THE CHECK FOR MY CATCHING THEM! HE CAN USE THE MONEY TO BUY SOME MORE BOOKS FOR HIS SCHOOL LIBRARY!
WHATEVER YOU SAY, BILL!
THANKS, BILL! YOU'RE A REAL FRIEND OF JUSTICE AND EDUCATION!



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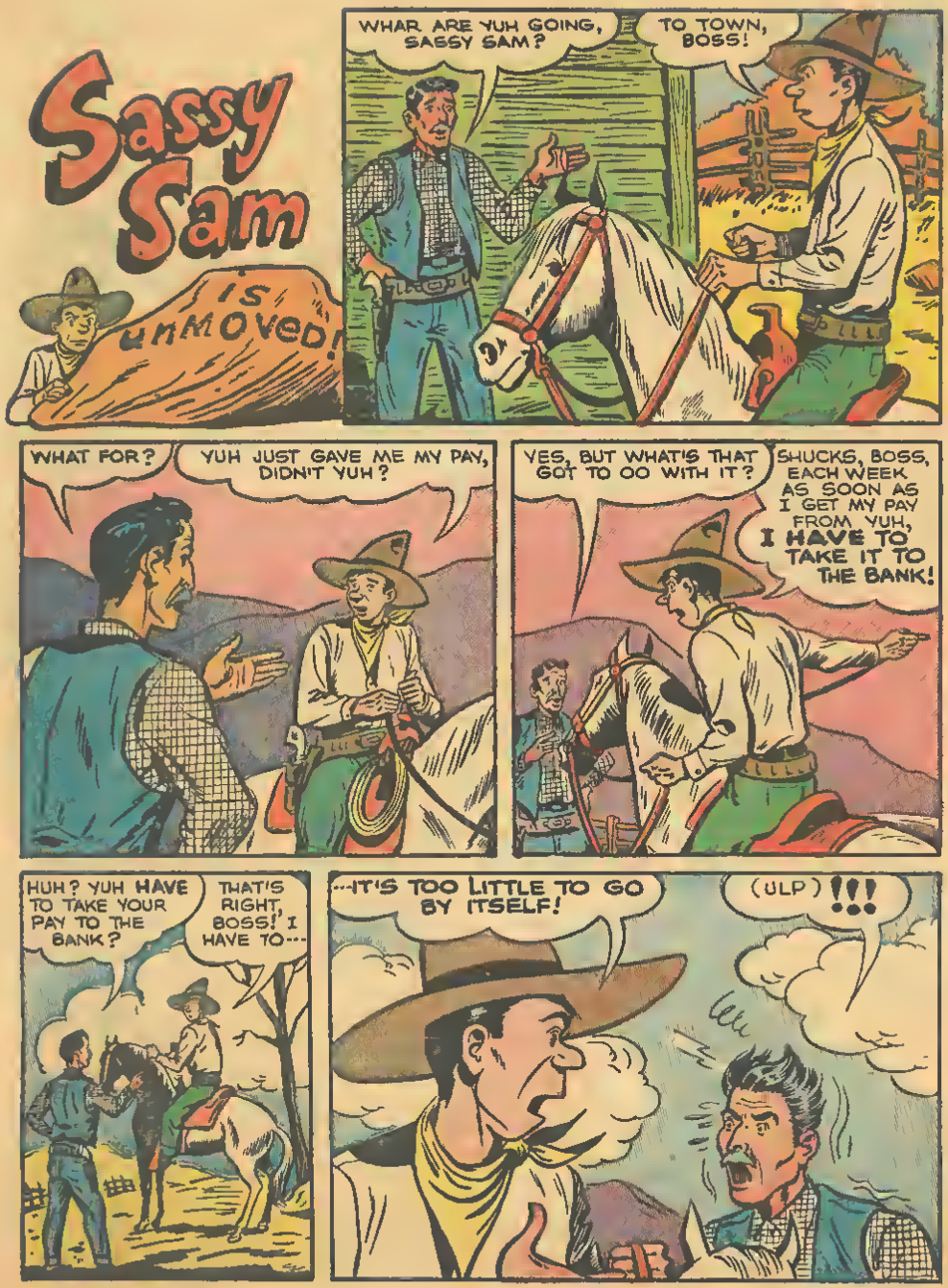
Sassy Sam is unmoved!
WHAR ARE YUH GOING, SASSY SAM?
TO TOWN, BOSS!
WHAT FOR?
YUH JUST GAVE ME MY PAY, DIDN'T YUH?
YES, BUT WHAT'S THAT GOT TO DO WITH IT?
SHUCKS, BOSS, EACH WEEK AS SOON AS I GET MY PAY FROM YUH, I HAVE TO TAKE IT TO THE BANK!
HUH? YUH HAVE TO TAKE YOUR PAY TO THE BANK?
THAT'S RIGHT, BOSS! I HAVE TO---
---IT'S TOO LITTLE TO GO BY ITSELF!
(ULP) !!!

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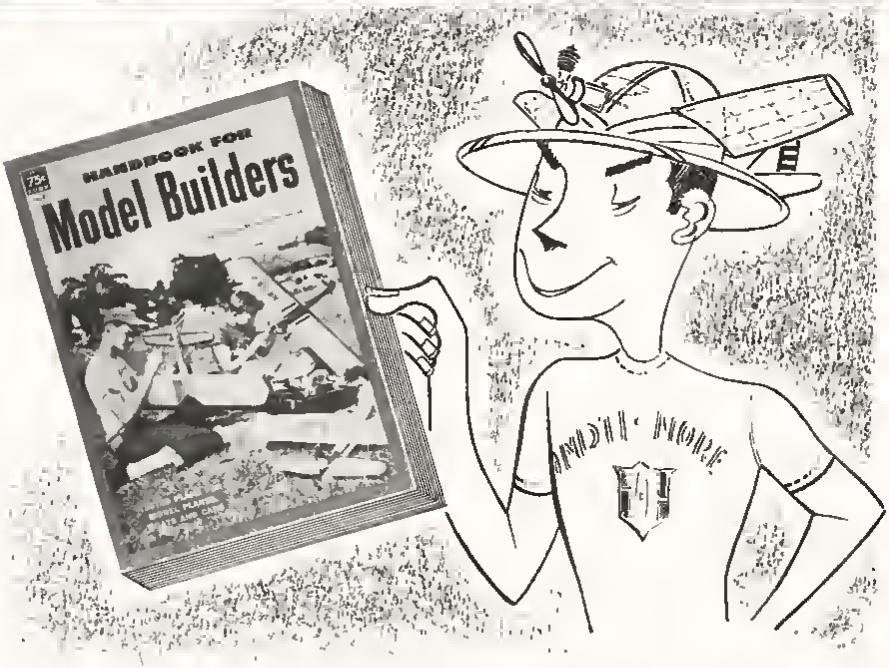

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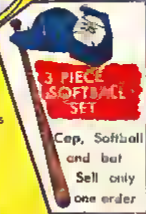

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